

An Interactive State - Centered Geography Lesson for the EC 1

Classroom

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We all know, as Montessori trained Guides that the Montessori Cultural Studies curriculum provides children with an opportunity to explore the larger world.

Students learn about the people, terrain, plants, animals, artifacts and foods of each continent as they study them in the course of the three – year cycle. The Montessori geography materials provide the initial avenue for their debut into the world for which they are a part, by introducing them to the physical world that surrounds them. The use of the land and water globe, continent globe and puzzle maps are highly sensorial in nature and provide a rich presentation accompanied by texture, movement and highly vivid colors, all very appealing to the young child. As the child works with the world map and the six puzzle maps of the continents, they finally reach the puzzle map of the United States. Then what? That’s when I desired to continue along this traveling journey from the abstract to the more concrete and narrow the scope to that of the child’s home state.

I set out to design a lesson which contained many of the same attractive components aligned with the Montessori principles, as seen in the geography materials that would impart a growing knowledge of the child’s home state, all the while being FUN and interactive! I was actually amazed how easily and quickly this lesson was to put together! That ‘s a definite bonus in my book, as our time and energy is a valuable and highly coveted resource in order for us to maintain a sufficient work, play, leisure and life balance.

The materials are mainly ones that you already have within your classroom or that can be inexpensively purchased. I got super lucky, as I located a deal at my local thrift store of a North Carolina shaped basket, which set me back a whopping \$3.00! Another

bonus! The most time consuming task was to do a small amount of research for your individual state of interest and note such things as pertinent; flag, capital, terrain, agriculture, manufacturing, peoples, animals, reptiles, foods, landmarks, etc. I narrowed these findings down to the most common ones (state reptile, mammal, fish, bird, rock, plant, flower, beverage, etc.) and things that a small child would like to manipulate and would comprehend its significance quite easily.

These baskets can be found on Amazon and Etsy, but can be found in thrift stores and yard sales, if you are lucky. I have seen plastic serving trays and ice cube state - shaped trays as well. One could use any shaped container to house the lesson as long as it relates to your individual state of emphasis. Here one link of many as an example.

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00A3KFO94/ref=cm_sw_r_em_api_glt_fabc_ZXY5BEE_PK3ZBHHVV899F

I began by designating North Carolina into its' three geographic regions and used different colors of paper to highlight the contrast between the regions. These regions were cut out and laminated to fit perfectly into its' respective region. I placed samples of the soil or terrain in small plastic containers, to coincide with each region, such as moss, red dirt and sand. The next part is to gather your items and or photos, then place each one into its' corresponding region, where it is commonly found. After placing all of the items, I took a picture in order to make a control for the child to follow. I also included some larger items that wouldn't fit into the basket, but the child understood it to be an important part of the lesson and placed it above or below its respective region as demonstrated by me in the presentation. Some examples of the larger items were the shell

of an Eastern Box Turtle (state reptile), large pin cone (state tree) and a wooden chair (furniture capital of the world). An extension of this lesson is to trace onto paper and cut along the outline of the state basket. If the child desires to do so, they could also color or paint each of the three regions and label them accordingly. I found this lesson to be a nice introduction for the younger child and an avenue for greater inquiry and exploration for the older child should they wish to do so. The initial presentation may include only one of the regions, and very few items or all of the regions and items, depending on the level of interest and readiness demonstrated by the child.

This was a very popular lesson in our classroom and highly informative on a level that the young child could understand, but most importantly ENJOYED!

Presentation 1:



Close up of Geographical Regions:



Piedmont Region



Coastal Region



Mountain Region

Complete Presentation:



Extension:

